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Review of progress in the implementation of the right to development including consideration, revision and refinement of the right to development criteria and operational sub-criteria

Written statement* submitted by Le Collectif des Femmes Africaines du Hainaut, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[2 February 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Written statement by Le Collectif des Femmes Africaines du Hainaut*

C.F.A.H. in partnership with Ariel Foundation International focus is on Youth participation. AFI Changemakers is an organisation dedicated to increasing the voice of young people at all levels of the United Nations. Facilitated by Dr. Ariel R. King and Ariel Foundation International, AFI Changemakers strongly believes that young people should take control of the future they want to see, and that their representation is vital to a more inclusive United Nations. Young people are trailblazers and represent some of the most forward thinking and progressive people in our society, whose fresh perspectives are invaluable in any discussion on contemporary issues. Many global problems disproportionately affect young people across the world, from conflict to climate change to the global economic downturn, and AFI Changemakers strongly believes young people should hold a stake in tackling and combatting these issues at the highest level. It was this belief that led Ariel Foundation International to hold the inaugural AFI Changemakers-UN Summit in December 2013, to coincide with 25 years of the Right to Development. Young people from all over the world gathered at the Palais des Nations to discuss development issues they felt were of extreme importance to future generations, and to draft policy recommendations to be submitted to the Right to Development Working Group for consideration.

Buoyed by the success of the 2013 summit, the December 2014 summit saw the organisation follow an ambitious expansion plan, nearly doubling the number of delegates and holding the summit across two full days. Included within the intensive summit agenda were presentations from the Changemakers on HIV/AIDs and Ebola to coincide with World Aids Day. The viewpoints discussed covered a wide variety of issues; from a speech by medical student Poonam Bhar on Russia's reaction to the HIV/AIDs epidemic taking place within their country, to a feminist perspective of HIV/AIDs from Michael Fox of Northern Ireland. The Changemakers were also audience to an influential panel, who presented their thoughts on a multitude of topics that celebrated the progress of 26 years of the Right to Development, but also looked forward to the many challenges that still lie ahead.

Workshops at the summit found youth perspectives on six key issues; slavery and trafficking, food security, discrimination, climate change, conflict zones and sustainability. This was not simply a rehashing of old ideas; the Changemakers came up with innovative policy recommendations that could reshape the response to these problems if they were to be implemented. Some of the brightest ideas included a carbon tax scheme from the climate change group; suggesting a per-ton CO2 tax penalty scheme on industries that refuse to cut emissions so that the revenue can be used to subside businesses transitioning into sustainable projects, encouraging rapid reductions in CO2 emissions. Another progressive example was a policy recommendation from the slavery and trafficking group; criticizing the use of the term 'modern day slavery' on the grounds that no other crime has been rebranded for the modern era, and that this term dilutes the seriousness of slavery in approach from the international community and wider public perception. We recommend that this term be phased out from official documentation and media use.

The conflict zones work shop focused specifically on two key areas of concern; poor access to education for young people trapped within conflict zones and the damaging effect this can have in the post-conflict era; and the inadequate international response to refugee crises. We propose increased funding for education within refugee camps, which provide young people with educational skills that are invaluable in rebuilding a post-conflict society, and an extension of Article 28 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the right to education), so that it is compulsory at a higher level, not only during the primary years. To tackle the inadequate response to refugees and asylum seekers, Changemakers propose a higher acceptance of asylum seekers from wealthier nations, to ease the burden on host nations struggling to cope, as well as the implementation of lessons concerning refugees and asylum seekers in all countries to increase empathy and improve the integration of asylum seekers into their new societies.

The climate change group were alarmed at the lackluster response of the international community to what they believe is the single greatest threat to the future of humanity. We urge the reduction of financial barriers in combating climate change by introducing tax penalties on the worst polluting companies that could be used to subsidise companies committed to sustainable practices, ensuring the policy is self-contained. We also want to see increased transparency in the lobbying industry in all areas, giving the public more confidence in the balance of power within the political system.

We also stress the importance of education in dispelling misinformation about climate change and promoting jobs in the sustainability sector at higher education level.

The group focused on food security identified four major problems that must be overcome to combat food insecurity. These were: a lack of infrastructure at a micro level, preventing farmers from gaining access to new technologies, fertilizer and other key tools; a lack of infrastructure at a macro level, with inadequate transport links along the supply change and poor or nonexistent food storage facilities; poor educational tools to improve the skills and knowledge of farmers; and the unfair nature of farming subsidies in the developed world that skew the market and deny developing world farmers the power to compete in global markets. Solutions focused on increased availability to community-owned microfinance institutions that would allow farmers to save together and invest in the future of their community, increased investment in food storage facilities and national transport infrastructure, and a United Nations led assessment into the impacts of farming subsidies to provide evidence that could be used to draft policies that best service the needs of farmers in both the developed and the developing world more evenly.

For the slavery and trafficking group, public perception and a lack of training for frontline staff were two of the biggest obstacles to tackling this global problem. We recommended reducing 'pull' factors by empowering vulnerable communities and strengthening criminal justice systems, as well as independent reviews into the impact of sex and drug laws with a view to reducing demand for trafficking. We also propose tighter controls and safeguards within businesses, particularly multi-national corporations with long supply chains, and improved education programs that focus on spotting the signs of a victim of slavery and trafficking for both the public and frontline staff.

The discrimination group focused on eight areas of discrimination: class, migrant, gender, LGBT+, religious, racial and disability. Some of the key recommendations included the encouragement of the adoption of a minimum wage whenever possible to prevent labour abuses, positive discrimination within police forced and judicial systems to improve the diversity of these national structures, and a tightening of hate crime legislation to prevent religious and racial discrimination that occurs online. We particularly recommend the adoption of an international policy framework that addresses all aspects of LGBT+ rights.

One of the major challenges to the modern world is the issue of sustainability, and the work shop focusing on this problem suggest increased funding for waste management systems as one vital aspect of their policy recommendations. Changemakers also recommend that public rankings of both company and industry commitment and action to sustainability should be made available, and governments should encourage the consumption of local and seasonal food through national campaigns and increased import taxes.

2015 will be an exciting year for the AFI Changemakers; our December 2015 summit aims to yet again double the number of participants and increase access pathways for those for whom Geneva would normally be out of reach. We enter this year with pride at what we have achieved thus far, and a calendar full of opportunities to continue enacting lasting change. Our full report from the AFI Changemakers Summit contains a more detailed explanation of all of our policy recommendations, and we intend to take this report to the Right to Development Working Group for consideration. We hope you read our report in full and take on board our policy recommendations.

A full AFI Changemakers Summit 2014 report can be found at www.changemakers-un.org or at www.arielfoundaiton.org.

C.F.A.H.
2 February 2015

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* Ariel Foundation International, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share(s) the views expressed in this statement.